

1989 YUKON QUEST SOUVENIR EDITION

Wednesday, February 15, 1989

Supplement to the Whitehorse STAR



Faro's Charlie Gauthier holds on tight to one of his dogs as helper Mark Lewis injects a nasal virus-control drug.

Star Photo by BERNIE ADILMAN

Quest digest

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT — The climax of the mushing year, aside from Alaska's Iditarod, is the 1,600 kilometre Yukon Quest. It's a unique dog sled race and one definitely worth watching.

See page 2

HOW IT'S DONE — Yukoner Lorri-na Mitchell, the first Canadian woman to enter the famous Quest, shares some of her secrets about running the race. Regardless of the cost, caring for the dogs is high on her list.

See page 3

TOWN LENDS HAND — Faro's Charlie Gauthier isn't running the race alone, the whole town is behind him. The gigantic pricetag of running a Quest either discourages or wipes out most mushers, but Faro is picking up most of Gauthier's tab.

See page 5

FAMILY AFFAIR — Ned Cathers left his family at home when he ran the Quest last year. But this year his 18-year-old daughter Jeninne has entered to give him a run for the money.

See page 10-11

QUEST BOOK IN WORKS — Whitehorse's John Firth, who claims to be the first journalist to cover the Yukon Quest, has decided to write a book about the race. He has five years of anecdotes and countless photographs to present in his soon-to-be-published book.

See page 17



Dog mushing: more than meets the eye

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Yukon Quest-ions and answers



Alaska's David Monson winning the 1988 Yukon Quest.

Star File Photo

By JEFF HARDER
The Whitehorse Star

While most Canadians despise winter, dog mushers and their loyal teams anxiously await the season from the day the last traces of snow melt into summer.

Forty-four of those mushers and some 500 canines will be unleashed Saturday on the 1,600 kilometre Yukon Quest dog sled race from Whitehorse to Fairbanks, Alaska. First across the frozen finish line bags \$20,000 US of a \$75,000 US purse.

According to a race director, the Quest is one of the most challenging events known to mushers worldwide. "The test of endurance is incredible," David Knight explains from his Whitehorse office. "They travel 12-15 days in the wilderness with all their belongings in the sled in front of them.

From a spectator's point of view, "It's interesting to see how they cope against nature," notes Knight.

And cope they do, no matter what Mother Nature throws at them. The race takes off — odd years from Whitehorse, even years from Fairbanks — no matter what the weather conditions.

Over the course mushers and their dogs traverse some of the most hostile terrain on the globe, often battling vicious temperatures.

"The cold was the worst part," Yukon Quest winner Bill Cotter says

of the 1987 race. "It was 60 below (-51 C) in Dawson City."

No matter how ugly conditions get, racers must perform their everyday tasks, the most basic of which is survival. Daily chores for each racer include feeding and taking care of themselves and their teams — a maximum of 12 dogs; setting up camp between the race's seven check-points; and covering between 110-130 kilometres of trail.

But "it's a great race to drive," says Cotter. "It's a real musher's race because you have a lot of time to be together. It's a long way between check-points (465 kilometres in one stretch)."

Although the camaraderie on the trek may be fun, preparing for a Quest win isn't, says the only Canadian to master the race, Bruce Johnson. "It is very serious.

"I had to start thinking 'win' in the summer (of 1985)," the Atlin, B.C. resident said of his 1986 win. "Then the whole family had to work toward the goal. All other family goals had to be postponed."

Johnson ran the race three times posting the best Canadian finishes in '84 and '85 before going on to take the top prize in '86.

"The difference between just running the race and winning is incredible," says the father of two. "Most Canadians don't understand it — to win is a totally different ball game."

Winning means building a suit-

able dog team and training them day and night for at least six months. The average team puts on about 2,000 kilometres of training before race day.

"I'd train in the worst conditions possible," says Johnson. "The windier the better. If I woke up in the middle of the night and heard the wind blowing, I'd get up and go."

But before a musher starts training he has to have a suitable Quest team. Dogs range from approximately \$500 to \$2,000 for a strong leader. The first Canadian woman to enter the race, Yukon's Lorrina Mitchell, estimated her race costs at \$30,000.

But a winning team isn't necessary on the Quest, says race director David Knight. "There are a lot of good mushers out there just to complete the race."

Whether a serious competitor or an enthusiastic sportsman, the dogs' well-being comes before the questers themselves, notes Knight.

"Dog deaths are minimal," says Knight, noting only four or five have expired on the Quest in its six-year history. "And when they do it's a very sad and emotional time for the musher. They usually scratch."

To ensure dogs are taken care of, Quest rules are simple and strict. Any musher abusing his dogs can be disqualified.

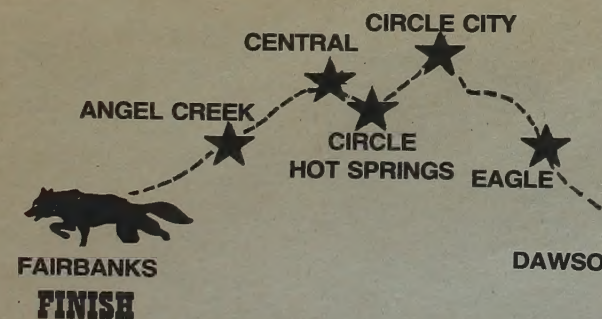
The rules also reflect the true spirit of the Yukon Quest: "The Code of the North" and "Frontier Courtesy" will prevail.

Good Luck and Happy Travelling
to all

1989 Yukon Quest

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BE INFORMED — READ THE STAR!

Mitchell shares Quest secrets

By JEFF HARDER
The Whitehorse Star

Lorrina Mitchell made Yukon Quest history by being the first woman to enter and finish the 1,600 kilometre dog sled race.

She ran the 1984 maiden race finishing 11th; scratched 1,100 kilometres into the 1987 race; and landed 14th spot in a field of 47 last year.

But she's not running this year.

"It's just too expensive," Mitchell explained from her acreage south of Whitehorse. "By the time I got started I had \$30,000 to \$33,000 invested."

The \$650 US entry fee is only the beginning of a musher's monetary headaches, said Mitchell. Suitable dogs are \$1,000 each and a strong lead dog may cost twice that. A decent sled is the \$1,000 range and then there is the food, cooking gear and maditory survival gear to load in it, added Mitchell.

"Then you need a (support) vehicle to travel the 2,000 miles, gas, oil and accommodation for your handler."

After the bills are paid there are at least six months of hard training for the musher and his/her team, said Mitchell.

"Only the top three (\$20,000, \$15,000, \$10,000) make any money," she claims.

Although Mitchell isn't racing this year, she has a sled -full of inside information about running the Yukon Quest.

"Everyone has their own little secret," Mitchell says of winning — or maybe just finishing — the race.

She believes in a rigid training schedule which avoids alcohol, caffeine and carousing. "You have to take care of yourself and your dogs."

"And you have to train yourself into useful patterns of productivity and rest."

Nutrition and hydration also fall into guarded categories. "Every musher carries different foods and drinks," said Mitchell. "Quality dog food is definitely an advantage."

But not every musher has access to the best food.

"There is a lot of corporate testing done on the Quest."

When the Quest started six years ago mushers were

required to leave each check-point carrying a minimum weight of food for every dog. The rules have since changed because smaller amounts of quality food proved contain the same nutritional value as large volumes of inferior feed.

Less food means less weight for the dogs to pull.

Once all the money is raised, training is finished and the sled is loaded, it's time for the musher to do battle with the elements for at least 11 days along a 1,600 kilometre trail. That's when it gets tough, noted Mitchell.

"You depend on yourself for everything out there. You are *the* cog in the machine that makes it all go," she said.

That means making it go on a course where over half the mushing is done in "the dark and cold." Mitchell faced — 60 C weather two years ago. "I was so sick I was sweating through my clothes at that temperature."

But the racers don't have time to worry about the cold or the dark. At every stop the dogs (usually 12) need to be fed and watered — which means firing up a stove to melt snow and heat food — as well as checked for general health.

That leaves the musher with precious little time for himself/herself. "You sleep whenever you can," said Mitchell.

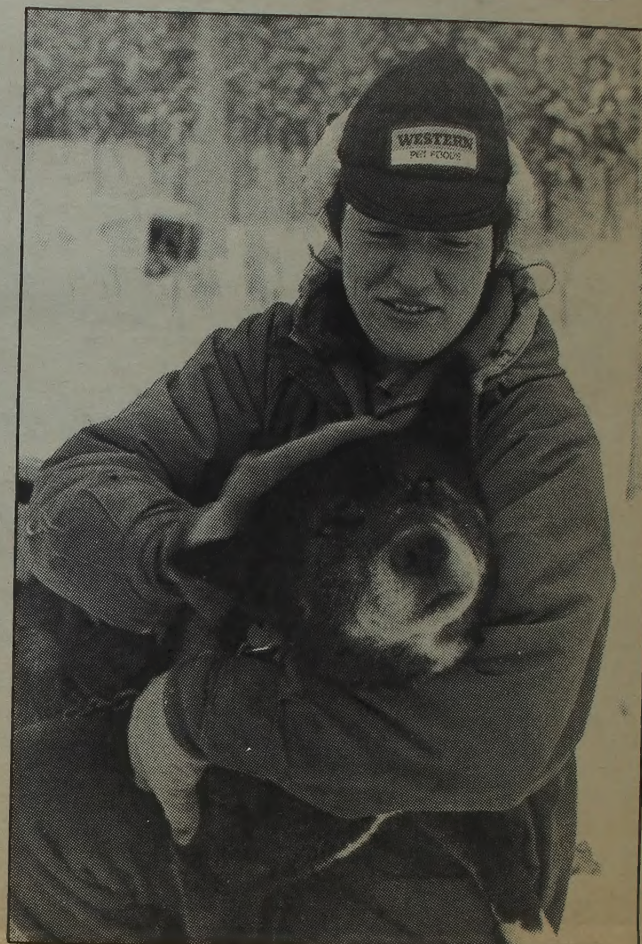
But that stolen sleep isn't restful. "You always have to be ready for an emergency. And if you sleep too long, you can fall behind (in the race)."

The dogs aren't immune to stress either, explained Mitchell. "Their personalities change totally. Dogs that never fight at home will start biting and others chew harnesses apart."

The combination of dog and musher fatigue is dangerous. "Mistakes happen under these circumstances," added the Quest alumna. "You have to cope with a lot of tough situations."

The huge commitment leaves one to question the wisdom of running such a race in the dead of winter.

"People do it for the same reason climbers climb mountains and people go to space," explained the Yukoner while filling her woodstove. "There's a challenge in testing yourself and your dogs."



Star Photo by JEFF HARDER

Whitehorse's Lorrina Mitchell with her lead dog Midnight.



Star Photo by BERNIE ADILMAN

HEADQUARTERS — Brian MacDougall's Quest office and home, sponsored in part by Mitchell's Pineland Kennels, on the bank of the Wheaton River.



My Good Wishes

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Your participation fills me with admiration
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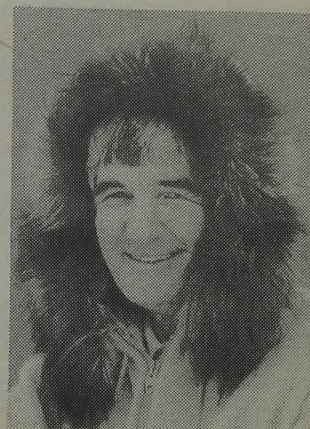
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Annual
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Ken McKinnon
Commissioner of the Yukon

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Message from the Mayor:

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all mushers well on the Trail of '89. May you find the wind always at your back and a clear trail that will lead all of you closer to your goals and aspirations.

I recognize the physical and emotional commitment of the musher and his team of loyal dogs. It is this commitment that is typical of the north, and that is what makes this race so special.

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Smooth Mushing to All!

"GO CHARLIE GO"

"He's a dog-mushing son of a gun"

By **BERNIE ADILMAN**
The Whitehorse Star

Two things set Charlie Gauthier apart from the other 40-plus mushers entering the 1989 Yukon Quest.

He's the only one to race with Eskimo dogs, and he's the only one to have an entire community behind him emotionally, and more importantly, financially.

"Quest for Faro," a committee formed to assist Gauthier on his 1,600-kilometre journey had raised almost \$11,000 for the RCMP constable at press time.

"I couldn't be in a better position to run the Quest," Gauthier said of the support the town of 1,400 has given him. "They've taken care of all of my major bills, and taken a big worry off my shoulders."

He is the first musher ever to run out of Faro and he said that caused a little apprehension when he first

appeared. "I think people had visions of a wild dog pack running around eating kids."

But the people of the town have accepted the stout musher and his dogs, even Mayor Ted Bartsch got into the act by writing "Go Charlie Go" — Gauthier's adopted theme song.

As mentioned, the other unique aspect of the Gauthier camp is his dogs.

Gauthier, who hails from Ross, Man., first got involved with sled dogs when stationed with the RCMP in Iqaluit, N.W.T. (Frobisher Bay) some five years ago.

"Most of the sled dogs there were Eskimo dogs, so it was the natural thing to get into," he said.

When he transferred to Faro, Gauthier brought five of the dogs with him, and these now form the core of his 14-strong kennel.

"These dogs might be a little

slower than the typical sled dog, but they have more endurance. I can run them steady for four or five hours, stop for an hour, and they bounce right back."

His animals' long hair can be a problem, especially between the foot pads where snowballs can be a major problem. "I'm hoping for -40 C weather for these shaggy things."

On the trail, whether it be balmy or frigid, Gauthier says he has no concerns about the 11 dogs he's running in the Quest.

"Mugsy (his lead) will never leave me," he says assuredly. "I could break my leg and he'd bring the team back to me."

Mugsy is renowned in the Gauthier camp for leading a team across the ice near Iqaluit for 30 kilometres in a howling blizzard. When they arrived safely at camp, they discovered the dog's eyes were frozen shut

— they didn't open for two days.

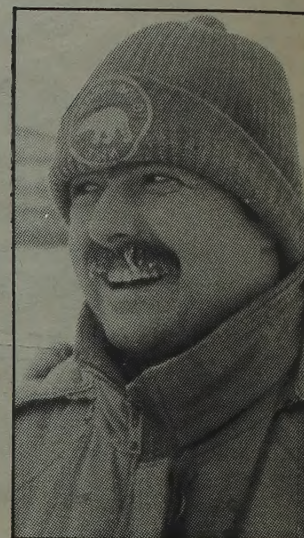
He has a close relationship with all of his dogs, as he showed when

he let all 14 loose for a run in his relatively small kennel area. "They're my babies, and I'm their best buddy, but I've also got to show them that I'm the pack boss."

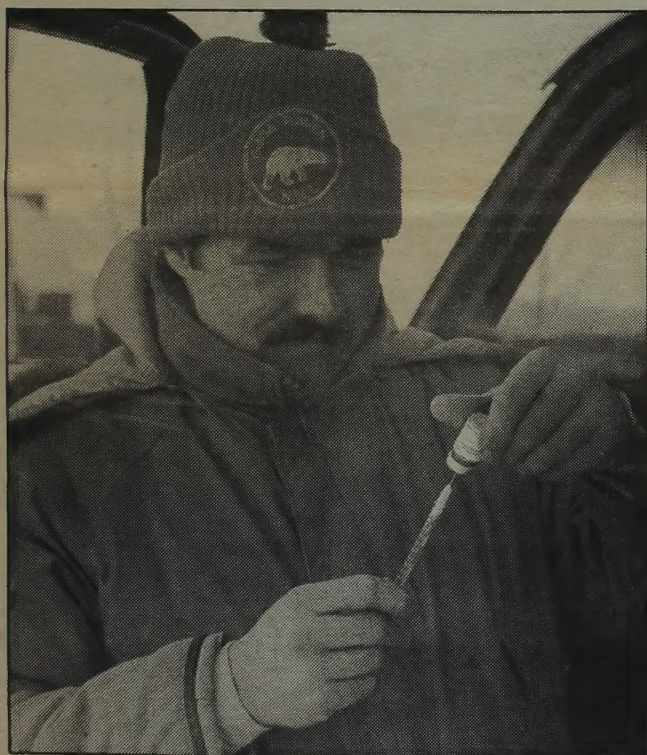
Gauthier says the same perseverance and dedication Mugsy showed is what he will need if he is to finish in his first crack at the Quest.

"My first priority is to finish, and finish healthy," he explains. "I've got to take care of myself, and of course the dogs. If you don't change the oil and keep it clean on a car, it won't run."

Finishing in the top 20 would be "gravy," but Gauthier said he's running "because I wanna. It's a challenge, and what's life without challenges."



CHARLIE GAUTHIER
Running Eskimo dogs.



Star Photo by JEFF HARDER

Charlie Gauthier fills a stubborn syringe in -30 C weather.

Entire town steps behind Gauthier's zest to Quest

By **JEFF HARDER**
The Whitehorse Star

It's a Faro-tale come true for Charlie Gauthier.

The 1,400 residents of the central Yukon mining town have thrown themselves behind dog musher Charlie Gauthier in his quest to win the 1,600-kilometre dog sled race from Whitehorse to Fairbanks, Alaska.

The town has formed a "Quest for Faro" committee whose sole purpose is to spearhead fundraising to help Gauthier run the famous Yukon Quest.

"It all started when we were playing ball together last summer," said Nels Grinde, the committee's president. "Charlie was telling us how he was going to run the Quest. It just progressed from there."

Immediately after that summer ball game an informal committee was struck to help the local RCMP constable and his Eskimo dogs tackle the challenging trail.

The committee's first formal meeting was held in September, 1988. "We had about 26 people (at the meeting). That's a pretty good turnout for Faro," noted Grinde.

The enthusiastic group quickly elected an executive and strategies were set to raise money, explained

the president.

And money they raised.

"Quest for Faro" accumulated almost \$11,000 — nearly \$8 for every man, woman and child in the town — in five months.

To stuff the Quest coffers the group staged a '50s theme dance, sold 300 custom shirts, 600 baseball caps and solicited local corporate sponsorship.

"Ninety-nine per cent of our (corporate) letters were answered," noted Charlie's wife Lucie, who acts as liaison between Charlie and the committee.

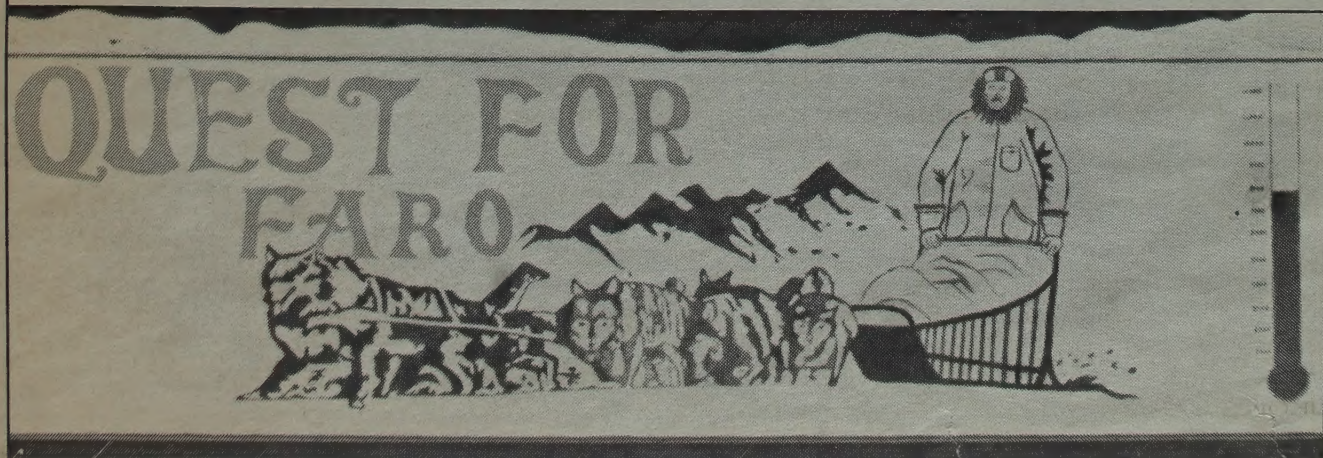
The committee was particularly surprised when the Faro Oldtimers hockey team and the Faro Lions Club threw monetary support behind the Quest cause.

"It's really overwhelming," said Charlie. "But it does add pressure. I don't want to let anyone down."

In return for Faro's generosity, Charlie says if he places in the money — the first 15 spots — he'll put the cash up for charity in his hometown. "I think it's important to put something back into the community," he said.

When the Quest is over Faro plans on maintaining "Quest for Faro."

"We chose the name because of its neutrality," explained Lucie. "The name can be used to raise money for anything in the community."



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First-time quester cautious

By JEFF HARDER
The Whitehorse Star

What is a truck driver from Nova Scotia doing entered in what is widely considered the most grueling dog sled race known to musher?

"It might have been a mistake," joked Brian MacDougall from his one-room cabin south of Whitehorse.

"Actually, I've been thinking about it for a long time," he added soberly.

MacDougall came to the Yukon four years ago. Friends of his were moving to the territory and needed

someone to drive their truck.

"I wasn't doing anything so I offered," explained MacDougall.

His spent his first winter bunking with those same friends. That's when he started dog mushing.

"They were boarding dogs at the time, so I got into it right away. I was unemployed so I spent my time training the dogs."

But preparing for the Yukon Quest is unlike anything the single musher has ever tackled. "It has turned out to be quite a bit of work."

The costs are also high. "Even with sponsors it takes quite a bit of cash. Getting set up financially is

tough," noted MacDougall.

And he's not putting in the effort to win the famous endurance race. "It's definitely something just to finish. I'm hoping I can do that."

Although MacDougall is excited about the prospect of running his 12-dog team, he is approaching it cautiously.

"I have no idea what it's like to do 1,000 miles. And the cold is pretty intimidating."

"But it's something every dog musher wants to do."

MacDougall has 14 dogs, all of which are male. "They get along really well. I never have fights."

During a visit to his rented homestead on the Wheaton River, the young musher cut loose all 14 of his men-only kennel. Although, they tear around the bush like crazed canines, each and every one responds to his master's call.

Being single has made preparing tough on the rookie quester, but he noted loyal friends and sponsors have given him a generous hand. "I've got a lot of people to thank."

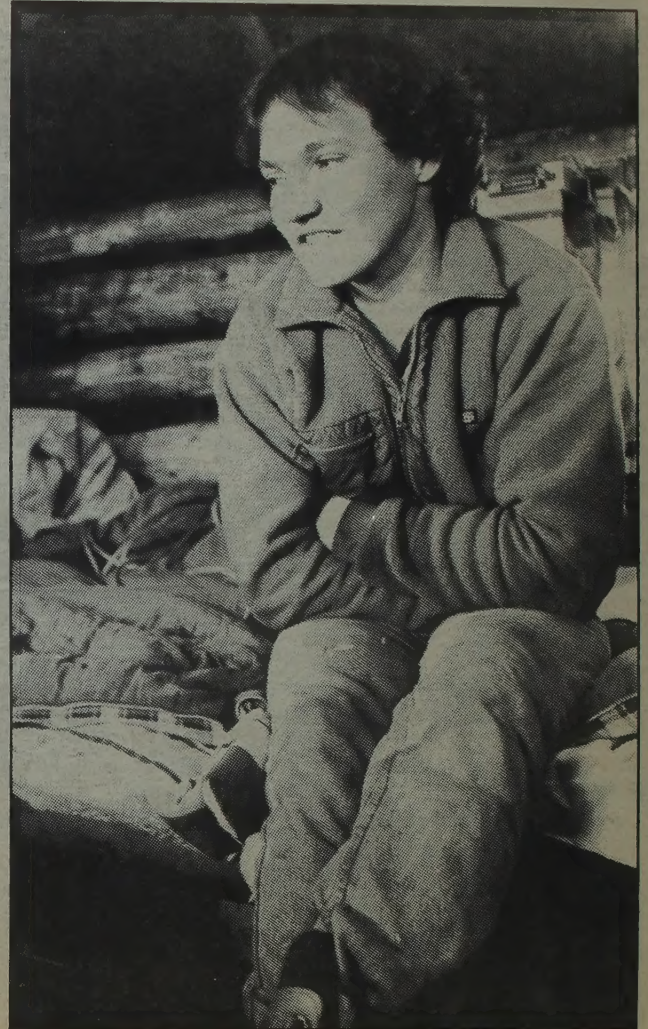
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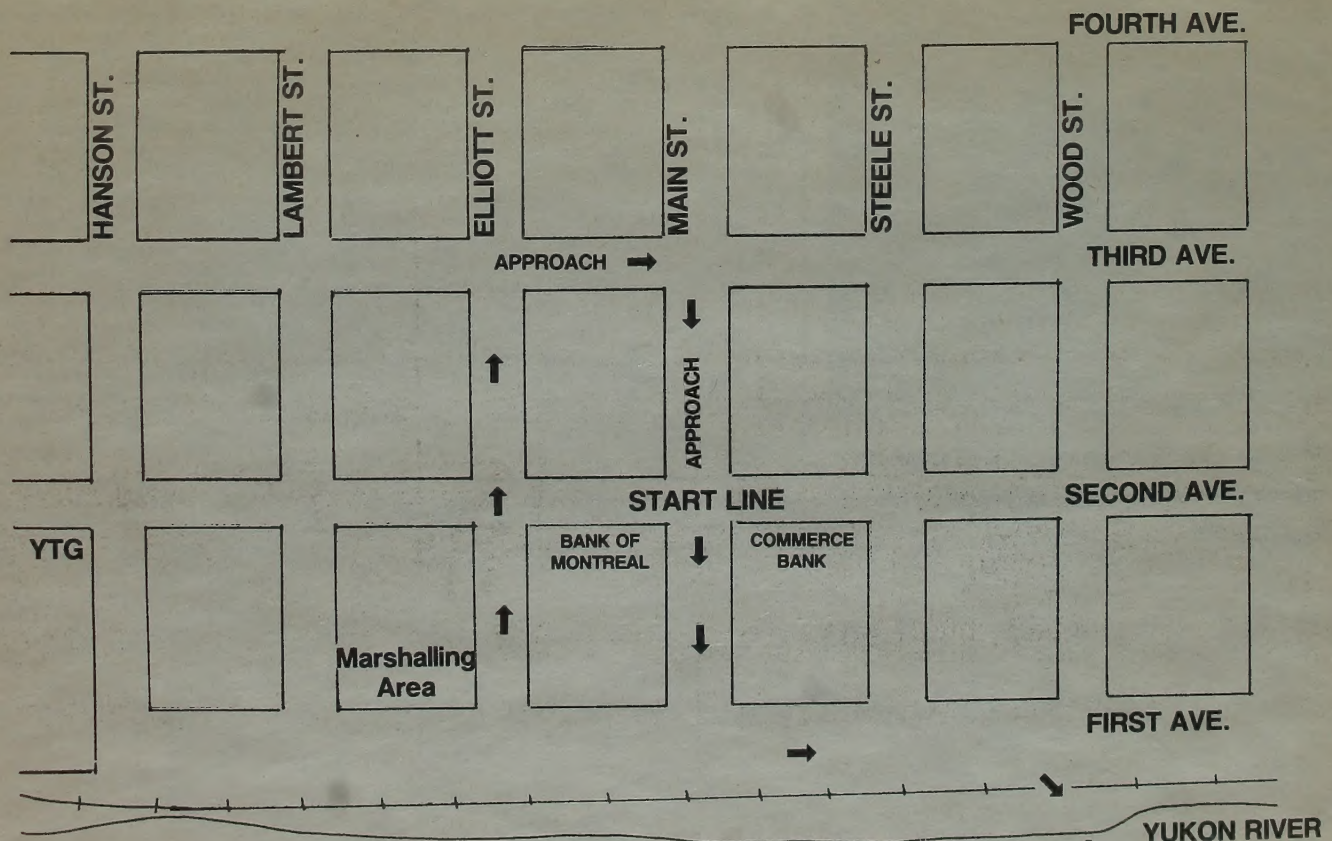
MacDougall's dogs ham things up for the camera.



Star Photo by BERNIE ADILMAN

Brian MacDougall perched in his one-room cabin.

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Marsh Lake dog musher learned lessons last year

By **JEFF HARDER**
The Whitehorse Star

Tom Randall's wife forced him into dog mushing.

It started eight years ago when Randall's wife, Elsie Wain, was at home recovering from surgery. "She had four dogs in the back yard and insisted I take them for a run," explained Randall.

When Randall didn't return after ninety minutes, she hopped on their snowmobile and caught up with them. There she found Randall still running the dogs.

"From then on I was hooked," he said.

Randall has built his Marsh Lake kennel to 35 dogs since his first mushing experience. He's taking 12 on the Quest, the maximum number allowed.

"I think it's an advantage. The more dogs you run with the less each one has to pull."

This is Randall's second crack at the Quest. He ran the route last year and says the experience will give him an edge this year.

"I am seriously looking at the mistakes I made last year. With the Quest, you just keep doing it until you make less and less of those mistakes."

According to Randall, one mistake is feeding dogs sub-standard food. "Meat that is just for animal consumption carries a lot of bacteria."

That bacteria, said Randall's veterinarian, places extra stress on the dogs. Minimizing that stress is foremost to the Yukon musher because of viral problems his team encountered last year.

"So this year I'm using meat that's fit for me to eat," declared Randall.

Furthermore, he hopes to protect his dogs from other illnesses with several hundred dollars in vaccinations.

After all, "Health care for the dogs is the single most important thing on the race. The second is the health of the musher," Randall added between cigarettes.

Braving the cold for almost two weeks makes clothing a big part in keeping the musher healthy. Randall is fortunate enough to have had a clothing manufacturer provide him with a \$700 winter suit.

"And it may only last a year," said the musher. "But if you're not dressed properly you could die out there, it's as simple as that."

Despite the dangers posed by the Quest, Randall is looking forward to the race. "It's an incredible challenge for your bush skills and your ability as an animal trainer. And it's a wonderful way to see the country."

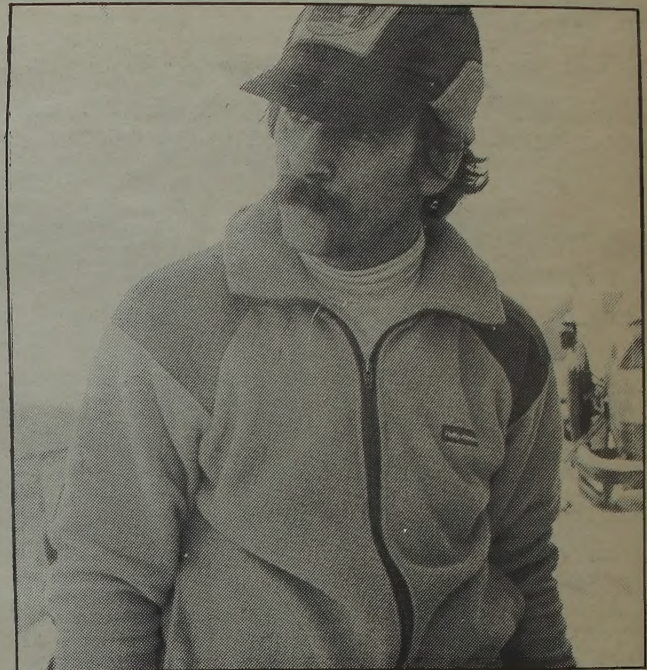
And see a lot of country Randall will. He's planning on mushing about 130 kilometres a day. "That is a pace I feel will put me in the money."

He'll be running four hours on and four hours off for the duration.

Although this is only Randall's second mushing marathon, he and his wife Elsie have been involved with the Quest since the start.

"We used to work in the check-points when we lived in Dawson," said Randall. Now Elsie is on the Yukon Quest Board of Directors.

Since Randall left the warmth of the check-point to tackle the trail, he found out it's a pile of work. "Elsie does a lot. I wonder how the single mushers even get to the starting line without a wife for help. I certainly wouldn't attempt it."



Randall is looking forward to his second Yukon Quest.



Star Photo by BERNIE ADILMAN

Tom Randall, a musher out of Marsh Lake, Yukon, picks up his \$400 fresh meat supply for the 1,600-kilometre race.



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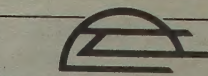
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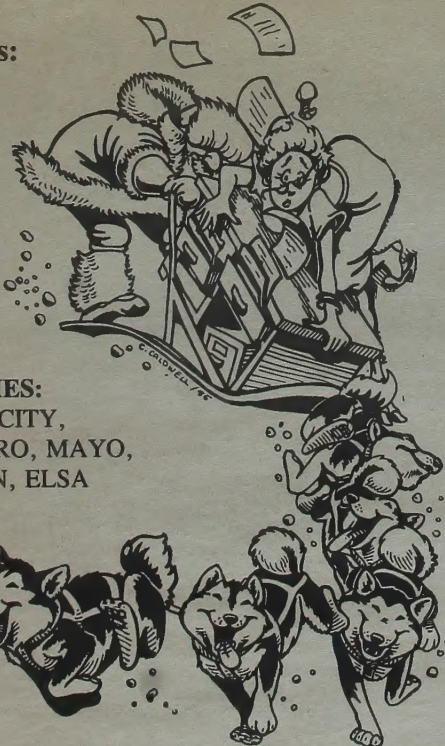
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Rookie ready and rarin' to go

By JEFF HARDER
The Whitehorse Star

Bob Grawehr has been hooked on the Yukon Quest since he watched the mushers storm out of Whitehorse in 1985.

"I saw them taking off and decided right then and there that I

wanted to do it," said Grawehr.

Since the second Quest (1985) he has been building a suitable team for the 1,600-kilometre trail to Fairbanks, Alaska. "To get the kind of dogs that can master the Yukon Quest is not an easy task."

Grawehr looks for specific traits in a dog: "It is not as much speed as it's endurance. And a smart dog is not always a good dog," noted the full-time plumber. "They have to have the desire to run."

Grawehr has also learned to respect the dogs' abilities and the importance of keeping his animals in top physical shape. "The toughest part is taking care of the dogs, especially the feed."

If the dogs don't eat and drink properly, Grawehr explained while casually rolling a cigarette, there is no hope in finishing the race.

Healthy eating habits work side by side with structured training habits with Grawehr. "I've been training hard for a year now. The dogs are tough — they've got the miles on them."

Grawehr works his team three or four days in a row and then gives them a breather.

Night mushing also plays a big part in his training. "Most of the race will be done in the dark," he noted.

Although the Yukon Quest is an out-and-out race, Grawehr says he runs dogs for more than winning. "You can go places where you can be all alone, and see things the average person doesn't see."

"It's satisfying to me when you have 12 dogs in front of you and they work for you. They give it their all."

Grawehr's love for the Yukon rivals that of his mushing. He came to the territory in 1982 on a vacation from his native Switzerland and decided to live in Canada's north.

"I was coming to the Yukon to meet a friend and continue on to Fairbanks and then Argentina. That's when I decided to move here," he explained. Grawehr married soon after relocating to the Yukon in '83 and now has a four-year-old daughter.

"I love the size and the openness," Grawehr said from his country home northwest of Whitehorse. "And I've travelled a lot around the world and find the people here (Yukon) pretty good."

But come Feb. 18, socializing will come to a halt as Grawehr harnesses up for his first Yukon Quest, a race he has no illusions of winning.

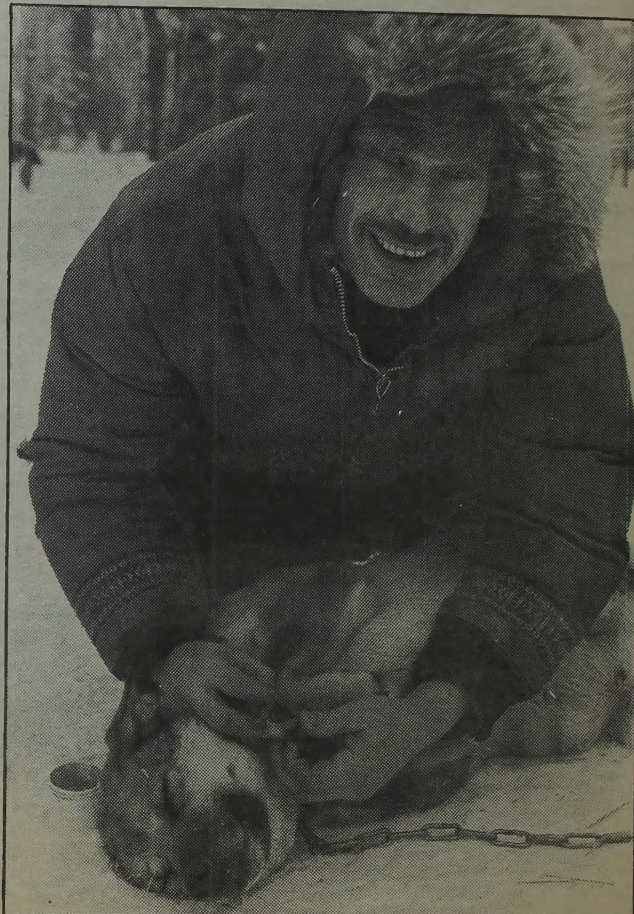
"I consider myself very much a rookie," he explained. "I hope to leave Whitehorse and get to Fairbanks in decent condition and with the dogs in good shape. I don't want any lost or any dead dogs."

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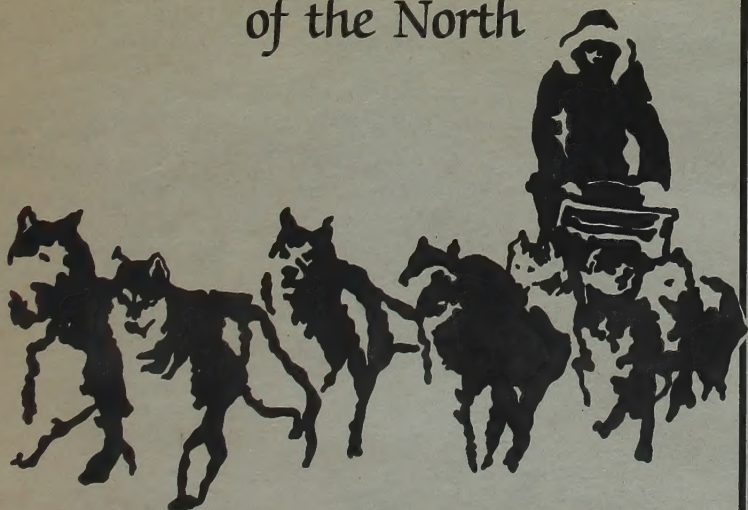
BOB GRAWEHR
First year in Quest.



Bob Grawehr takes special care of his dogs' feet.

Star Photo by JEFF HARDER

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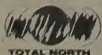
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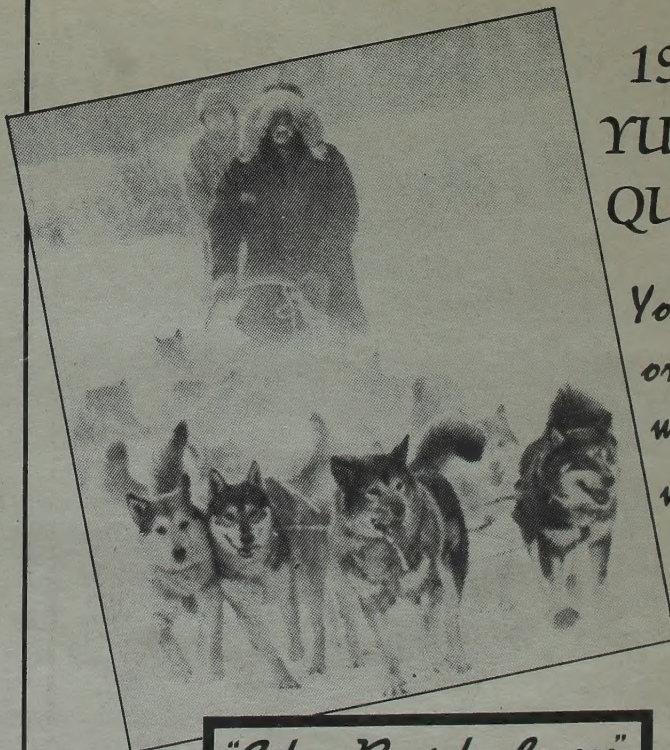
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Father, daughter teaming up

Teenager hooks up for '89 trail trial

By **BERNIE ADILMAN**
The Whitehorse Star

She's the first in many aspects. But she won't likely finish first in the Yukon Quest.

Jeninne Cathers is the youngest female and the only one ever to race with her father in the 1,600-kilometre Quest — and she's also a realist.

The just-turned 18-year-old has no visions of winning the race. That's not what she is in it for.

"I just want to finish in time for the banquet (in Fairbanks early in March)," she says jokingly.

An optimistic forecast would see her in the top 20 in her first Quest, she says.

Cathers is in a unique partnership with her father and fellow musher Ned, who is also running the Quest. The two are sharing dogs from their Wanderlust Kennels, which they operate on the eastern shore of Lake Laberge.

Ned ran the Quest last year, so by mutual agreement, he gets the cream of the dog crop. Ned is serious about getting into the money (top 15) — Jeninne is looking at it as a learning experience.

"I'm just going to try to do the best I can, and we'll see how high I place," she says, "but my main goal is to learn as much as I can for future races."

The thought of dog mushing was far from Jennine's mind until a few years ago.

"I never ran in anything before because I didn't like to be cold," she explains, "but I just decided to dress warmer." And she's glad she made the move.

Two years ago, she entered her first major race, the Percy de Wolfe, and was the youngest ever to finish

that race.

Last year she, her mother Mar and brother Brad, 11, helped Ned in last year's Quest, and that experience affirmed her desire to run the race.

With those two experiences, she feels she has an advantage over other first-time racers.

"I've learned that many of the little things can make a difference," she says, "such as how often to stop and speed to travel."

Having her father preparing side by side with her for the race hasn't hurt either. "It's a personal advantage to me," she says. "I've learned a lot just by watching him."

Not to be left out is mother and wife Mar, who is doing a double-shift sewing gear and preparing meals for dogs and mushers alike.

Mar says she confident of her daughter's ability to successfully negotiate the Quest trail, but that won't stop her from worrying as she waits at checkpoints.

"I know when they should approximately be getting in," Mar says. "If it gets past that time, I start to pace — I realize that things can happen on the trail."

Ned laughs when he says he told his daughter the same thing someone told him many years ago — "It sounds like a stupid thing to get into to me." But he's confident she'll successfully traverse the trail.

On the trail itself, Jeninne will put to test the training she has given her 12-dog team over the past several months.

Her relationship with her dogs is of vital importance, she says.

"If you're nice to your dogs, they are going to want to perform for you," she says. "Susan Butcher (three-time Iditarod winner) babies her dogs, and her results speak for themselves."

Jeninne's results this time around are not a priority, nor are they the reason she is running.

"I'm in it for the challenge," she says. "I'll be a better human being for it, but my main reason is I like to be out with the dogs."

"I want to raise dogs, be around them and race them — and this is the best way to go about that."

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Star Photo by BERNIE ADILMAN

Jeninne Cathers, 18, is the youngest woman to ever enter the challenging Yukon Quest.



Star Photo by BERNIE ADILMAN

Ned Cathers, who placed 19th in the 1988 Yukon Quest, mushing his team across the frozen Lake Laberge in January.

to tackle Yukon Quest

Experienced dogs will deliver

By **JEFF HARDER**
The Whitehorse Star

Dog mushing is a family affair at the Cathers' place.

Ned Cathers and his 18-year-old daughter Jeninne are racing in the Yukon Quest this year; Mother Mar handles supply and services; and Brad, 11, manages the racing puppies at their yard located on the east bank of Lake Laberge.

Ned and his Wanderlust Kennel already have one Yukon Quest under their belts, an experience he believes will help him and his team move into a prize position.

"You learn a lot about yourself and your team out there," he

explained. "The first year you don't push you dogs hard because you don't know what your limits are."

He missed the money by four places last year when he finished 19th out of 47 mushers.

Nevertheless, Ned was pleased he and his dogs finished "healthy and happy" in '88.

"It's a good feeling," Ned explained, "to know you can look after yourself and your dogs over that distance."

He strongly believes a musher with first-class dogs which have never seen the trail would have a tough time winning the arduous Quest.

"Ten of mine (12-dog team) know the trail. The other two are my

weak links."

Last year, Ned's weakest link was his sled. "It was a little too long. That resulted in a major loss of time."

Strict physical and mental preparation are priorities to Ned in his quest for a money placement.

The simple function of a musher's hands is vital when faced with brutal temperatures known to hit — 60 C. Frostbite is an ever-present risk.

"Your hands are very important," Ned explained while weaving some tow line for his rig. "You are constantly taking them out of your mitts to handle the dogs. They're a key part of the team."

By losing your hands, said Ned,



MAR CATHERS
Chief of support staff.

you lose the capability to care for yourself and your dog team — a dangerous proposition on a deserted northern trail in February.

Hand-in-hand with the physical demands of the Quest are the mental challenges, noted Ned. "You rely on yourself for everything. You are your own coach, player and captain. There's no one there to help you."

That places every responsibility along the frozen trail firmly on the shoulders of the athlete, noted Ned. "You get so tired you're ready to fall asleep, but you're still making all of the decisions. You can fall asleep on the sled — sometimes you fall right off."

Although the Quest is costly — \$15,000 before everything is said and done — Ned says the trip is unforgettable and finishing is satisfying: "It's hard on the musher and the dogs at the time, but when you finish they're (dogs) in super shape."

He speaks confidently about this year's race: "I know I can place in the money, but it's a long race and anything can happen."

But Ned is skilled in the outdoors. He and his family operate Wanderlust Wilderness Adventures from their log cabin on Lake Laberge.

Last year Ned only had 24 hours rest before a scheduled guest arrived for a winter vacation of dog mushing. "The dogs put on another 700 or 800 miles before the season was finished," he said.

So what happens when Ned gets home this year?

"Well, he has to be home early to finish our addition (on the cabin) by March 17," states his wife Mar. "We have a guest coming."

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Mush ado about nothing

By **BERNIE ADILMAN**
The Whitehorse Star

I don't know what all the fuss is about.

All you do is stand on two slats of wood, grip some handles, yell a little at some dogs, and off you go.

At least that's what this reporter found when he got the opportunity to drive Jeninne Cathers's dog sled a couple of weeks ago near her family's home on the shores of Lake Laberge.

Viewpoint

When Jeninne suggested I give it a try, a wee bit of apprehension crept into my being, but I threw caution to the wind and climbed aboard.

It was easy.

The dogs had no trouble staying on the precipitous trail, and no "gee" or "haw" was necessary over the entire journey.

An occasional "tsk, tsk" kept the dogs going, but other than that, no expenditure of energy was necessary.

A ferocious head wind slashed at me and my team as we negotiated the trail, but I was properly dressed and suffered no ill-effects.

The dogs did not once whine or beg to stop for food or water, nor did the rigors of our quest affect my constitution.

So I really can't figure out why everyone we've talked to is undergoing such incredulous preparation for the Quest. After all, it's just a sled race.

So what if my trail was over a smooth and solidly frozen Lake Laberge and in perfect visibility.

So what if the dogs (and us) were fed and watered before we left the cozy comforts of the Cathers homestead.

So what if the three-kilometre trail against 15 km-h side winds was one the dogs had been on innumerable times.

So what if the dogs were well rested and eager to run.

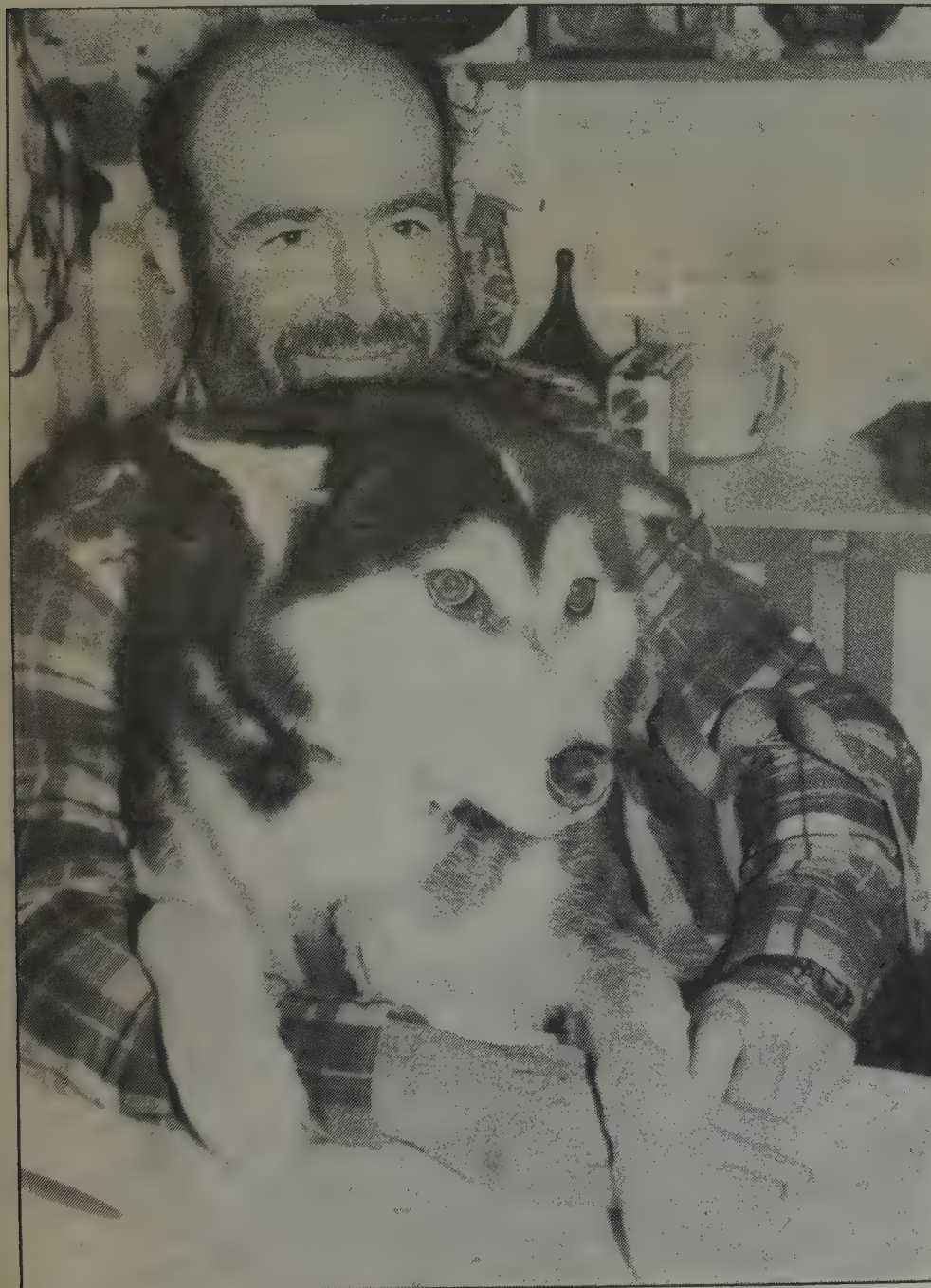
So what if I had 14 dogs pulling, instead of the standard dozen or less.

So what if Jeninne took care of all the necessary commands to the well-mannered dogs.

So what if I didn't have to worry about setting up a camp in —40C weather and waste-deep snow.

The way I figure it, you just multiply my journey by 533 and there you have the Yukon Quest.

Sounds like a piece of cake to me.



Star Photo by **BERNIE ADILMAN**

Ned Cathers is close to his dogs, but this one seems to have taken that to the extreme.



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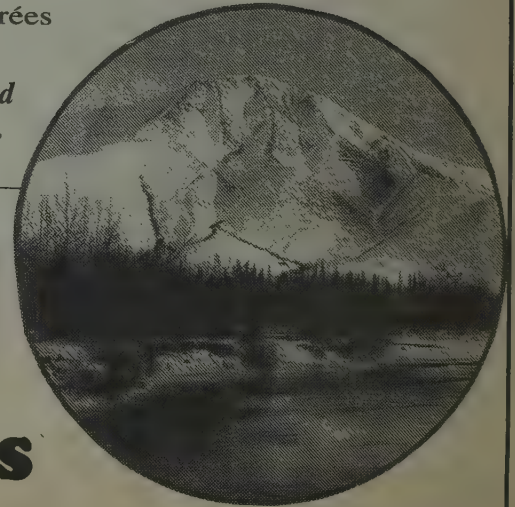
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The colder the better

By **JEFF HARDER**
The Whitehorse Star

Dawson City's Francois Varigas is hoping for a cold and lonely trail this year.

He favors the Yukon Quest style of dog sled race because of the great distances between check-points, thus placing more emphasis on the musher's ability to take care of himself and his dogs.

"On the Quest you have to make your own check-points between the major check-points. There isn't always somewhere to warm up."

That bodes well for the French musher. "Even when it's minus 55 I don't mind — it's all part of the game."

To Varigas, winter camping and dog treatment is a big part of the Quest game and its outcome. "It's tough on the musher and the dogs. They have to be taken care of no matter where you are."

"And that means there are lots of people that will have a little harder time."

This is Varigas' fourth year in the Quest. In 1986 he finished 16th; in 1987, he earned seventh place and best Canadian finish; and in 1988 he scratched.

"That one (scratch) doesn't count," said Varigas. Three of his 12-dog team got hurt at the start and in their best interests, he pulled out of the race.

Even though his '87 placing is impressive, Varigas speaks confidently he could have finished higher in the money. "I had better dogs

than that, but I came out too fast from Dawson and burned them out.

"Although this is just my fourth year racing, I feel I have quite a good team and I am well organized. I am much faster this year."

Varigas has been busy strengthening his 30-dog kennel. "I switched dogs because I used to have all Eskimo dogs. Now I have gone to more racing-type dogs."

And they've been training hard together. "The cold hasn't stopped me," noted Varigas.

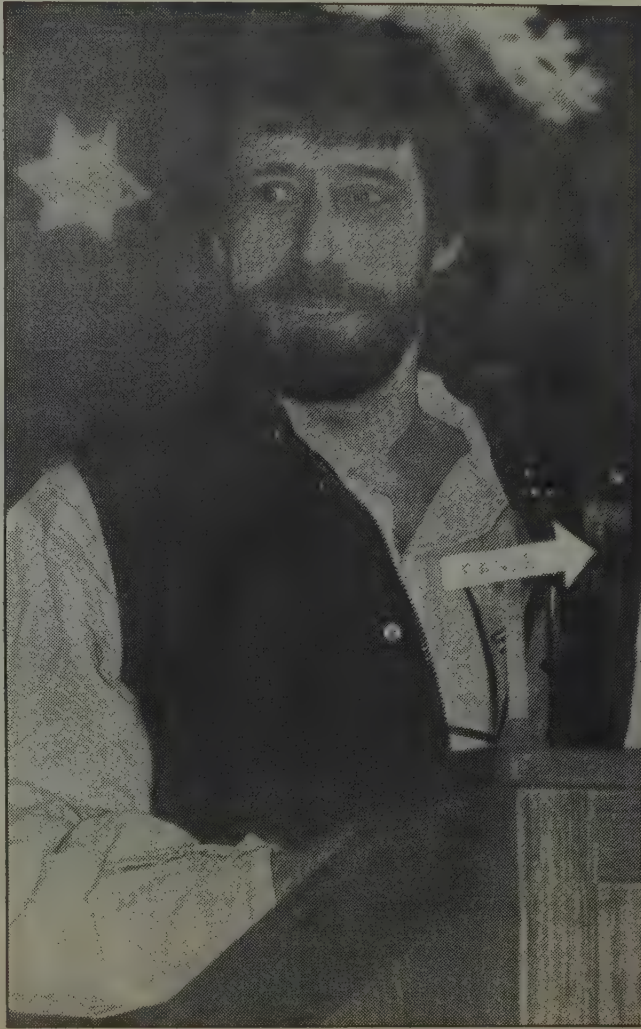
As well as a rigid training schedule, the Dawson City musher has found two generous sponsors to help him find a place on this year's money list. One is Aldham Roberts of Liverpool, England and the other is Harry Hill of Toronto, Ont.

"Their money has allowed me to by the right equipment and spend more time training. I usually spend a lot of money and don't make any," laughed Varigas.

Despite the high cost of preparing and entering a race like the Yukon Quest, the Frenchman maintains a positive attitude. "You have a choice whether or not to play this game. I know what to expect and you'll never hear me complain."

Varigas arrived in the Yukon seven years ago from Scandinavia where he broke into dog mushing 15 years back. He moved there from his native France.

According to Varigas, signing up for the Quest and sticking with it for four years is perfectly natural. "It's in my back yard. And I've got to do something with those dogs."



Star File Photo

Dawson City's Francois Varigas at last year's banquet.

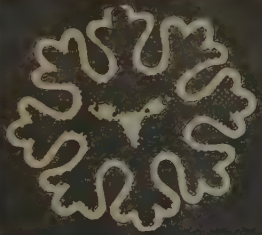
Quest '89 mushers

Frank Turner, Pelly Crossing, Y.T.
Tom Randall, Marsh Lake Y.T.
Brian MacDougall, Whitehorse, Y.T.
Ned Cathers, Lake Laberge, Y.T.
Jeninne Cathers, Lake Laberge, Y.T.
Bob Grawehr, Whitehorse, Y.T.
Charlie Gauthier, Faro, Y.T.
Francois Varigas, Dawson City, Y.T.
Larry Smith, Dawson City, Y.T.
Bob Pelling, Charlie Lake, B.C.

Amy Squib, Two Rivers, Ak.
James Poage, Central, Ak.
Marc Poage, Central, Ak.
Sonny Lindner, Fairbanks, Ak.
Kate Persons, Kotzebue, Ak.
Ketil Reitan, Kaktovic, Ak.
John Anderson, Willow, Ak.
Ralph Seekins, Fairbanks, Ak.
Jeff Fisher, Cantwell, Ak.
Steve Barb, Healy, Ak.
Harry Sutherland, Fairbanks, Ak.
David Sawatzky, Healy, Ak.
Peter Butteri, Tok, Ak.
Kris Kristensen, Tow Rivers, Ak.
Bruce Lee, Denali Park, Ak.
Dick Bamum, Fairbanks, Ak.
Bob Bright, Watersmeet, MI.
David Scheer, Kaslof, Ak.
Jeff King, Denali Park, Ak.
Heath Duncan, Soldotna, Ak.
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Bob Holder, Fairbanks, Ak.
Michael Maurer, Salcha, Ak.
Gerald Riley, Nenana, Ak.
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Larry Johnson, Nenana, Ak.
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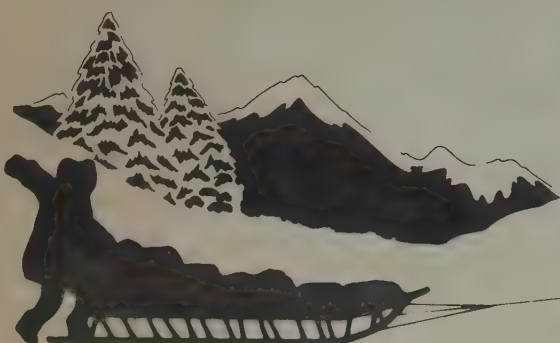


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*May Good Luck be with you
on the trail to Fairbanks.*

Northwestel



Turner harnesses up for sixth year

By JEFF HARDER
The Whitehorse Star

Five years and over 7,000 kilometres.

That's the tale of the dog-mushing tape for Frank Turner, the only Canadian to enter every race since the Yukon Quest's 1984 inception.

Although he now has a 33-dog kennel in Pelly Crossing, 300 kilometres north of Whitehorse, his mushing beginnings — 14 years ago — were humble.

"I came here to visit the Yukon

and bought a husky to take home to Ontario," said Turner. Although Frank didn't return to the Yukon for good until a year later, his team grew from the day he picked up his first dog.

After another purchase, a friend giving Frank a female dog and an ensuing litter of puppies, Turner had enough dogs to form a team. All he needed was a sled.

"I found a wooden sled when I was out hiking. It was about 50 years old and quite dilapidated," said Turner. But after a few repairs

and some fine-tuning he was off and running.

It wasn't long after that the old sled was replaced and Turner was knee deep in endurance racing, the form of competition he favors. "You have time to enjoy your dogs. Sprinting is far too hyper."

In days gone by, Turner transported his team and all the equipment in a Valiant wagon. "I didn't have a truck and dog boxes," he explained.

Because of Turner's interest in endurance racing, the Yukon Quest

was a natural step six years ago. "The Quest appealed to me.

"Now it's a habit," he joked of his perfect attendance record.

Although Turner aims to enjoy every kilometre he races, he takes some aspects of mushing seriously. "I am increasingly trying to become more competitive without losing the pleasure."

He hopes his prototype racing sled will give him an edge this year. "It's higher off the ground (than a traditional sled) to reduce friction," noted the bearded Quester. "And it has springs to help absorb bumps along the trail."

His delight with the hand-made Alaskan sled is reflected by the smile stretched across his weathered face. "The technology is costly, but it's a lot easier to drive."

The technology doesn't go on hold in the summer. "I have them (his team) pull a four-wheeler during the summer months."

Turner emphasized the value of training a Quest team year round. "You have to teach them to be tough and pull. And you build them up by increasing the distance."

But the exercise doesn't mean the Quest will be easy, added Turner.

"Sometimes you wonder what the hell you are doing out there — you're cold and hungry and your dogs slow down. But then your spirits lift and you are so alive. Especially at night with the (northern) lights."

But gazing at the aurora borealis won't get a Quest musher over the



FRANK TURNER
Determined dog musher.

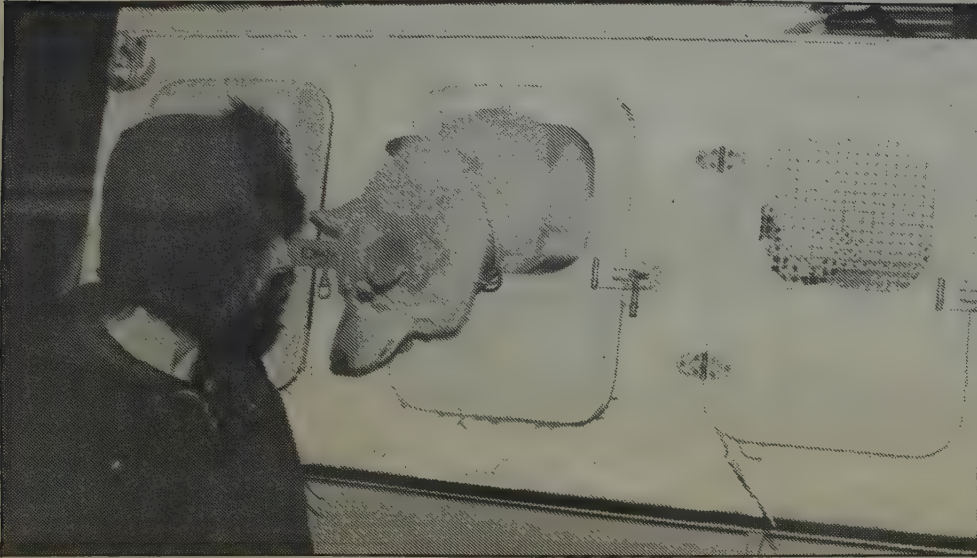
finish line. "You have to do your homework," advised Turner.

"You have to go out and talk to people who have run it before. Then you have to separate fact from fiction."

But the methodical veteran has done his research and is ready to hook up his 12-dog team. "We've got a rhythm. When we go out on the trail we're all a part of it."

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Star Photo by BERNIE ADILMAN

One of Frank Turner's team takes a good hard look at his master while in Whitehorse.



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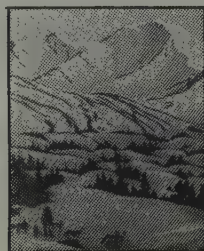
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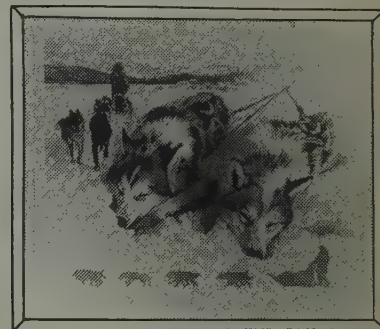
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Quest material mushes way into book

By **JEFF HARDER**
The Whitehorse Star

The Yukon Quest has all the makings of a good book.

So Whitehorse's John Firth has set out to do just that.

Firth was inspired to write "Dog Drivers" while he was covering the first Quest in 1984 for the *Whitehorse Star*. "I was sitting in a check-point when I thought 'Wow, this is amazing. I wouldn't exchange this experience for anything in the

world.'"

At that point, Firth explained, he decided to catalogue every bit of information he could lay his hands on concerning the 1,600-kilometre endurance test. But it wouldn't be until four years later that he actually sat down to begin writing the book.

"My goal is to create a quality piece of work, not a quicky book just to get it out on the shelf," declared the writer.

Firth spent most of last summer collecting newspaper clippings, li-

brary material and talking to dog mushers in preparation for the Quest documentation.

"I started at the *Star*, then went to Alaska and visited the Daily News Miner newspaper in Fairbanks," he said. "Then I went to the Quest office there."

Firth found a warm welcome at every stop. "When I was in Fairbanks mushers started turning up just because they knew I was in town. Dave Monson (winner of the 1988 Quest) drove over 200 miles (300 kilometres) to talk to me," added Firth.

While dog mushing is catching the public eye in Alaska, Firth says it has a ways to go in Canada. "In Canada it's considered a haven for a few flakes. But the people involved are anything but flaky."

Furthermore, dog sledding is big business, noted Firth. "It's a billion-dollar industry worldwide. Thousands of people line the tracks in Europe to watch races."

"Dog Drivers" will also introduce its readers to dog sledding beyond the Yukon. "It's important to give the background," said Firth.

The book will focus on the dogs themselves; mushers, who they are and why they do it; technological aspects of dog-sledding; the all-important clothing; and strategies used by mushers seeking an edge against their crafty competition.

Firth says he also hopes to take

some of the more tedious topics, like effective dog breeding, and simplify them for the uninitiated.

Getting the dog-mushing message across shouldn't be a problem for the 35-year-old Yukoner as he has lived in the North "as long as I can remember."

He graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1976 with a degree in creative writing.

And as early as 1970 Firth was working as a reporter for the *Star*. Following his initiation to the maiden Yukon Quest as a journalist, Firth signed on as a race director, serving three consecutive years.

Now Firth is a full-time financial adviser with the Mutual Group in Whitehorse, and a part-time author. Although he gave up writing as a career, Firth is excited about "Dog Drivers."

"Hopefully this book will reach people who otherwise would never know about it (the Quest) or hear about it."

Firth made it clear he's not writing about the race for either fame or fortune: "A book like this isn't going to make anyone rich. All I want to do is recover my expenses. Then I'll consider it a commercial success," laughed Firth.

Firth has secured at least one commitment to publish the book. He hopes to have the illustrated book on store shelves by Christmas.



LARRY SMITH
An elusive character.

Smith back for 2nd try

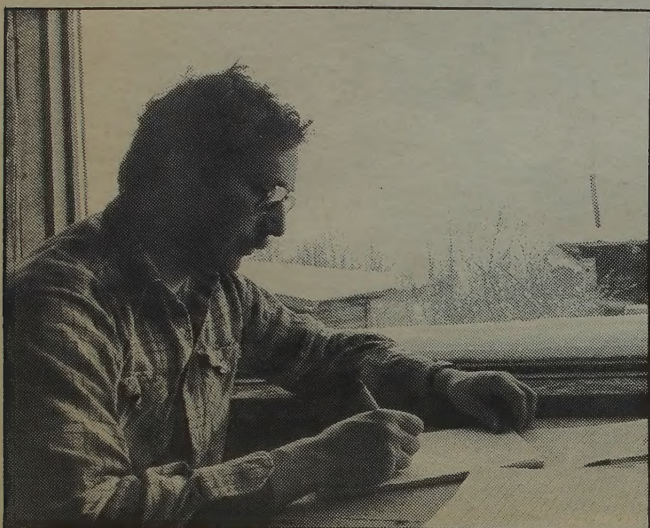
Although Larry "Cowboy" Smith dropped out of last year's Yukon Quest, he's back for a second stab at the frosty finish line.

He's hoping for miserable weather every step of the 1,600-kilometre race, according to his Dawson City handler Mimi Elliot.

"Most people hate the cold. Larry uses it to his advantage because he knows it bothers other people."

Furthermore, he is no stranger to long-distance racing. Smith has run Alaska's Iditarod on several icy occasions.

He is a private man who runs Red Dawg Kennel near the Yukon's Klondike City.

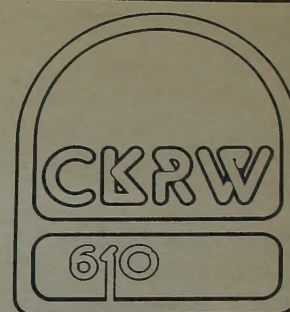


Star Photo by JOHN FIRTH

Whitehorse's John Firth was so moved by the Quest that he set out to write a book about the subject.



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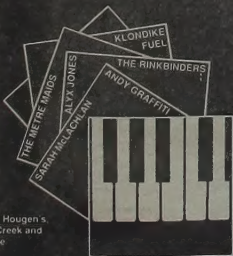
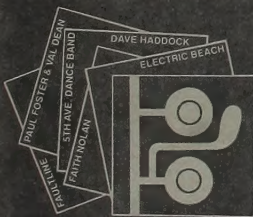
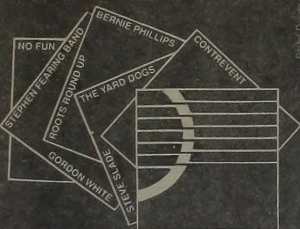
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Good Luck to All Mushers

GOOD LUCK

To All 1989

**Yukon Quest Mushers
and Their Dogs**

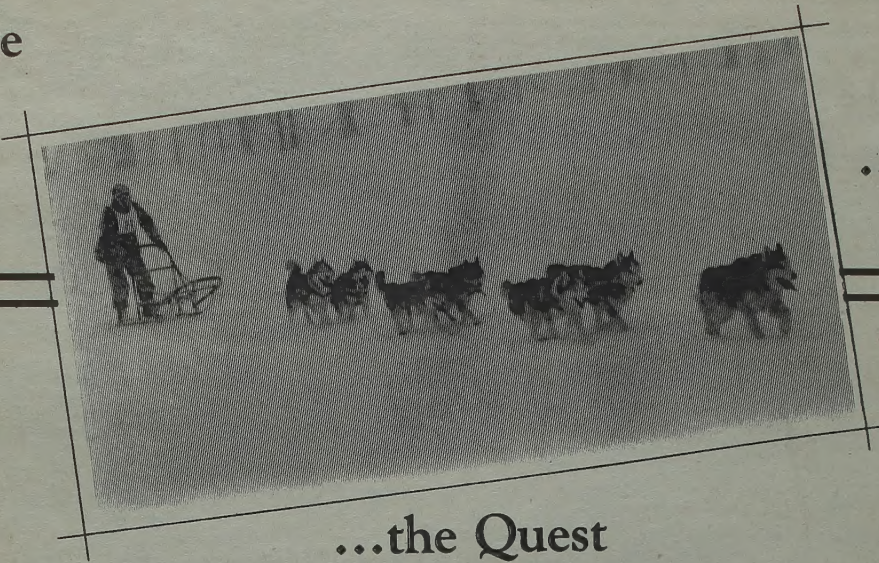


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FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS
GOOD LUCK!
Ned and Jeninne

Your spirit and stamina continue
to be an inspiration to all of us.
As you begin your thousand mile Quest
Best wishes from Elmira and the West
You'll be the best we've ever seen
So here's to you and your daughter Jeninne

-your friends and admirers
"The Martin Family"

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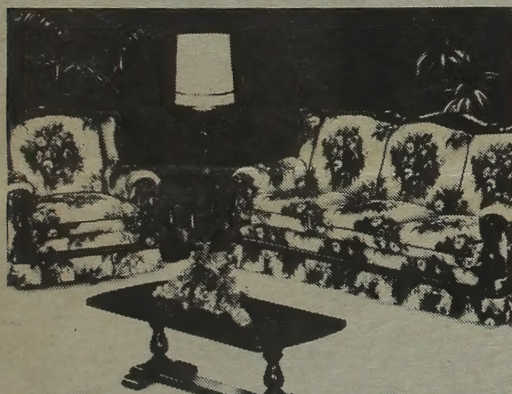
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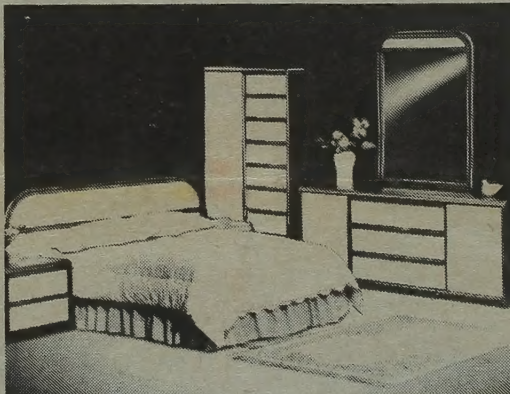
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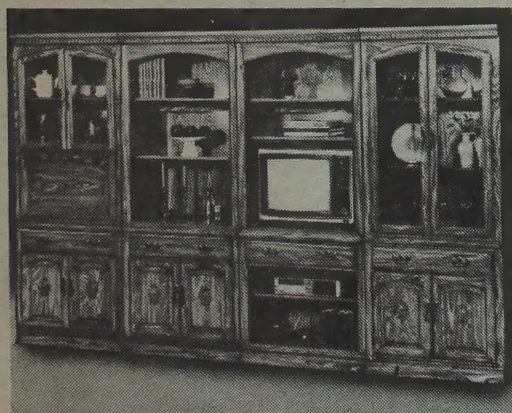
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